

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 871

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOGADISCIO 0756

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR ENRG SO ET

SUBJ: SIAD' S COMMENTS ON TENNECO' S DISCOVERIES

REF: MOGADISCIO 0730

1. DURING MY MEETING MAY 22, SOMALI PRESIDENT SIAD INDICATED MISGIVINGS ABOUT TENNECO' S OPERATIONS IN OGADEN. HE THOUGHT IT UNFORTUNATE AND INDEED PERPLEXING THAT REPUTABLE AMERICAN COMPANY WOULD INVEST LARGE SUMS IN SUCH CONTROVERSIAL REGION AND SINK ONE OF WELLS SO NEAR PROVISIONAL BORDER. THIS ONLY ADDED TO COMPLEXITIES OF ALREADY TURGID SITUATION. POSSIBILITY OF OIL DEPOSITS EXTENDING INTO SOMALIA COULD CONSTITUTE ONE MORE MOTIVE FOR ETHIOPIA TO INVADE SOMALIA. SIAD WONDERED WHY USG HAD PERMITTED TENNECO TO GET INVOLVED IN SUCH OPERATION.

2. I SAID USG DID NOT TELL PRIVATE AMERICAN COMPANIES HOW THEY SHOULD RUN THEIR FOREIGN OPERATIONS. THERE WAS NOTHING SINISTER BEHIND TENNECO' S EXPLORATIONS AS PRESIDENT SEEMED IMPLY. GIVEN CURRENT SHORTAGES, ALL INTERNATIONAL OIL COMPANIES WERE ACTIVELY SEARCHING FOR OIL THROUGH OUT WORLD AND TENNECO MUST HAVE THOUGHT CHANCES OF FINDING SOMETHING IN OGADEN WERE GOOD.

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EM I ADDED THAT ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT COULD IN THEORY HAVE EXPRESSED SIMILAR RESERVATIONS ABOUT CONCESSION SOMALIS HAD GIVEN HAMMAR NEAR KENYAN AND ETHIOPIAN BORDER. SIAD SCOFFED, SAYING NOBODY DISPUTED SOMALI SOVEREIGNTY IN HAMMAR'S AREA.

4. SIAD WENT ON TO SAY HE WAS INFORMED RESULTS OF HAMMAR'S TESTS WERE IDENTICAL TO THOSE OF TENNECO. IT WAS ACCORDINGLY PARADOXICAL THAT HAMMAR HAD CLOSED DOWN OPERATION WHILE SO MUCH FUSS AND PUBLICITY MADE OVER TENNECO'S FINDINGS.

5. I SAID WHILE NOT INFORMED ON LATEST DEVELOPMENTS, I HAD HEARD TENNECO HAD DISCOVERED CONSIDERABLE GAS BUT NOT YET OIL IN COMMERCIAL QUANTITIES. ETHIOPIANS PROBABLY STILL OPTIMISTIC IN VIEW LONG AND SO FAR UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCH FOR OIL IN EMPIRE. SIAD BELITTLED TENNECO'S GAS DISCOVERY, SAYING SOMALIA HAD GAS ITSELF AT AFGOI (NEAR MOGADISCIO). HE ALSO TENDED DOUBT THAT TENNECO HAD FOUND OIL IN COMMERCIAL QUANTITIES DESPITE ALL ETHIOPIA'S TOUTING.

6. COMMENT: SIAD'S REMARKS CONFIRM SUPPOSITION THAT SOMALIS HAVE LONG FEARED THAT EXPLORATIONS FOR OIL IN OGADEN WOULD STRENGTHEN ETHIOPIAN INTEREST IN HOLDING ON TO OGADEN AND THUS NULLIFY WHATEVER SMALL CHANCE THERE MIGHT BE FOR ETHIOPIAN CONCESSIONS TO SOMALI IRREDENTISM. BY SAME TOKEN, TENNECO'S EXPLORATIONS INCREASE (IF THAT IS POSSIBLE) SOMALIS' INTEREST IN DISPUTED AREA. MOREOVER, FACT THAT IMPORTANT AMERICAN COMPANY NOW INVOLVED IN AREA TENDS ENCOURAGE HABITUAL SOMALI SUSPICIONS THAT USG IMPLICITLY TAKING ETHIOPIAN SIDE IN TERRITORIAL DISPUTE.
LOORAM

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